

zero; today that backlog is at 500 cases. In other words, if we quit having an appeal to the Supreme Court, we would have 500 cases to continue to work on and to argue. And the 500 cases would probably take us a good year. We could almost go a year in this state without another appeal and still be busy, just with the backlog that is waiting to be heard. Now that isn't a particularly good system of justice either, because in effect what you are is you're denied your right to the Supreme Court for a speedy determination of whether you're rights were upheld in the lower court, or whether your trial was conducted correctly. And so what we've got is now a system that isn't going to change. In 1975, they talked about that the caseload was going to continue to increase. It was going to be just on a curve, straight up. We did a study this last summer, by the National Center for State Courts, and they had a rather extensive study. And what did they recommend? The exact, same thing. In fact they recommended the same constitutional amendment in 1976, as we're doing today, as the same has been recommended by this Center for State Courts and their study. But what we really have right now is we're at a crossroads. We can continue to let things go as they are, much as probably what we did in 1976. Why? Because there wasn't a crisis in 1976 yet. But they were pointing the way, and they said, it's going to happen, it's going to happen, and if you don't take a look at this issue, you're going to have an intolerable situation. And once you reach backlog in the Supreme Court, it isn't going to recede, it isn't going to go away, in fact it's going to get worse. And that's exactly what happened. This Legislature was correct in the study it did in 1976. And the study that we've done this last summer is in the same wavelength, it's the exact, same recommendations, only they're saying now the crisis is already here and, unless we do something on a permanent basis, our system is on the verge of collapse. What I would say to you right now, as we discuss this issue the rest of the morning, if Senator Chambers chooses to do so, which is certainly his right to do so, and I'm glad he's treated me so well for being a new member, and I thank him for that. But I think the thing we want to look at right now is...

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: ...what are we going to do?

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute, sir.